



## NEWS RELEASE

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### **'Charlie Rock' maintains peace, stability in Tikrit as part of V Corps' 1st Infantry Division**

**By Sgt. 1st Class Harvey Cole**  
U.S. Army Europe Public Affairs Office

**TIKRIT, Iraq** -- About 160 kilometers northwest of Baghdad, overlooking the Tigris River, are palaces that once offered comfort to former Iraqi president Saddam Hussein. Outside the walls of these towering sand-colored buildings lies Hussein's hometown.



SGT 1<sup>ST</sup> CLASS HARVEY COLE

1st Lt. Bret Boyd, 3rd platoon leader for Company C of the 1st Battalion, 18th Infantry of V Corps' 1st Infantry Division briefs his Soldiers on safety and gives them some last-minute instructions prior to going on patrol in Tikrit, Iraq.

In an ironic twist of fate, what once was a vacation spot for the former dictator now could be a model for Iraqis in the development of life in the post-Saddam era.

"This city is one of the better examples of how Iraq can work, and that's bad for the bad guys," said 1st Lt. Bret Boyd, 3rd platoon leader for

Company C of the 1st Battalion, 18th Infantry Regiment of V Corps' 1st Infantry Division. "Outside of Baghdad, Tikrit is the political capital of Iraq."

Boyd said Saddam's government came from Tikrit, a town that has always been rich. "A lot of Saddam's governors were his cronies from his home town, so seeing stability in Tikrit is bad for the bad guys," said Boyd.

"I know we are doing a good job in Tikrit and things are getting done. We are just trying to help rebuild the country and make it better for the Iraqi people," said Pfc. Joshua Oliver, 3rd platoon radiotelephone operator.

"When we first got here, we were getting attacked a lot more often, but I think because we are a tough unit and we are always in the city with a show of force, the enemy hasn't been attacking us as much," said the Chattanooga, Tenn., native.

"We are definitely making a difference," added Boyd. "The people have come ridiculously far from when we first got here. Initially, when we would go on patrol, people would throw rocks at us and kids would make faces at us as we drove around."

Although the citizens' reactions to the Soldiers of 3rd platoon weren't favorable, the troops have continued to fulfill their role here. It took a while, they say, but with time, observation and the ability to prove the Soldiers were in country to help, a sense of trust has been built between them and the Iraqi people.

When the unit began to fight the insurgency, the city's residents were watching to see what they the Soldiers would do and how they handled missions, said Boyd. "The

key is that you've got to get out there and make contact with people, conduct raids and hit targets. Then you've got to do this without killing civilians, without ticking people off, without destroying the town.

"When the people see that (you are helping) they'll support you," said the Newport Beach, Calif., native. Now Iraqis are seeing what security can be, versus what it once was, and that makes a difference to the support being given to the Soldiers.

"When we drive around now there is a big difference. Now we've got people giving us information and telling us things like where bombs and suspects can be found," said Boyd.

"There are two ways to find an improvised explosive device ... one is if it blows up, second is if you find it," said Boyd. "The preferred method is to find it, and

having these people help is tremendous. There are times 7-year-old kids will tell you there is 'boom-boom' down the street."

The Soldiers need informants' help, so Boyd and his platoon members talk to the residents of Tikrit. "You need to find people you can trust, so that they'll trust you, so you can engage (the insurgents), so informants tell you when things are going on. That's when you'll find stuff," he said.

Boyd's positive outlook is tempered with caution, and the knowledge that there is still work to be done.



SGT 1<sup>ST</sup> CLASS HARVEY COLE  
Spc. Victor Alarcon of Company C of the 1st Battalion, 18th Infantry of V Corps' 1st Infantry Division talks with Iraqis in Tikrit in an effort to further relations between the Soldiers and members of the city.

"While there are people trying to do the right thing, there are still cells of insurgents holding on to the ways of the old regime and strong-arming those who wish to help.

"One of the more difficult things we're trying to combat is the bully picking on those wanting to do the right thing," said Boyd.

When it happens to the Soldiers it is easy to fix, because it becomes a battle drill.

"We've gotten pretty good at those, but the challenge comes when it happens to the people and they are getting bombs thrown in their yard ... they feel threatened ... they become scared to come talk to us. We are trying to figure out how these intimidator-type groups work so we can put a stop to them," he said.

One of the ways the infantrymen are combating the "bully factor" is by providing a bit of extra security for informants. "We'll provide overwatch over the houses of those people who are attacked a lot," said Boyd.

With the return of sovereign rule in Iraq, the Iraqi National Guard has a new mandate, and the 1st Infantry Division's continued presence enables them to concentrate on their jobs.

When 3rd platoon arrived, the ING soldiers would quit every two or three weeks.

"Before they were here just for a paycheck, and when something would get difficult they would just quit," said Boyd. "Now we've got a bunch of good guys, and they are building some continuity and a cadre of their own.

"They've basically taken [the U.S. Army's] Primary Leadership Development Course outline and have developed a cadre of their own based on the training received," he said.

"The ING and police force have come around a whole lot since we've gotten here. They are taking all the stuff we are training them with, applying it to their daily service and they are now seeing this as their fight," said Boyd.

"They aren't seeing themselves as a subsidiary to the American forces around here. They are seeing this more as their thing, and we are trying to take that relationship and form it so we can say, 'Hey this is your fight. We are here to teach, mentor and support you guys when we can, but Iraq can only be successful if you guys are at the helm.' It has been kind of fun to watch this thing come around," he said.

As the Iraqi people continue to take on more responsibility the division's Soldiers have to battle more than the enemy to stay alive, the lieutenant said.



SGT 1<sup>ST</sup> CLASS HARVEY COLE  
Soldiers from the 3rd platoon of Company C of the 1st Battalion, 18th Infantry of V Corps' 1st Infantry Division patrol the streets of Tikrit, Iraq.

"One of the most difficult things about this fight is complacency," said Boyd. "You will go out the gate over 100 times and nothing happens except smiling kids (and) people waving at you, but all it takes is for one guy to lose concentration and be focused

on something other than the mission, and that same person waving at you is trying to kill you.

"But the leadership keeps us focused. We've got good leaders who keep telling us every day to stay focused on the mission," he added. "I understand and trust what we are doing here. We've got a good team here that tells me every day what we are doing down here and they sell me (on it). So it's understanding the role and keeping everyone focused."

"The main reason I stay motivated and focused is because my brothers in arms are over here getting shot daily, and my job is to ensure it doesn't happen," said Oliver.

"A lot of things run through my mind when getting ready, going on, and after a patrol ... but my training helps me stay focused when we are in the city. When out in the city I stay focused by keeping watch on my mission, scanning my sector and staying focused to get the jump on the enemy instead of him getting the jump on me."